How I become the proud guardian of a sylph.

by

Alex Jahans

Hello, My name is Tom Prosser.
It all, started when I'd cycled into Woking and was browsing the books, trying to decide which ones to pirate on audiobook when someone came up to me and asked me where the reference section was. I looked her in the face to be polite and there was no love or lust at first sight, our destinies were not entwined, I just subconsciously noted ‘She's ginger’ as I pointed to the reference section. “Umm, I think it's over there”

A while later I had bought a KFC snackbox and was sitting on a park bench in town square nervously watching the pigeons when a little sausage dog came sniffing round my feet. I scratched its ears and it rolled over so I rubbed its belly.

A voice from my right said. “You're good with animals, aren't you?”

“Yeah.” I said. “But I could never bare to see them ill so I don't have any.”

At this she took issue. “But you're eating KFC”

I shrugged. “Tried being a vegetarian and ended up fantasizing about chicken so I decided that since the chickens were still fucked all I was doing was sending a message and one I could better send as a writer. I can't wait until vat grown meat is a thing.”

And then she was gone.

I finished my chicken, said goodbye to the doggie and cycled home.

Half a week later I was waiting for my lift home from a game of Dungeons And Dragons at a local pub. I was just staring up at the stars, wondering about my hero's glance up at the sky over Innsbruck when a vaguely familiar voice said. “Would you like to go there?”

“Where?” I asked, confused.

“Anywhere out there.” She said as she pointed up at space. “Would you like to go there?”

I laughed. “Of course but it's not like it's going to be danger and excitement and really wild things”

Now she looked me in the face and it was like I saw her for the first time. Her auburn curls, bright blue eyes and that little group of five freckles in the shape of a clover on her left cheek. “What if there was? What if it was like TV?”

I beamed. “All Timelords, Klingons and Peacekeepers? I could dig that so long as I got to go home and watch my let's plays at the end of a day. I can't miss my Etho videos, nor my roleplaying games.”

She laughed. “All of reality, the entire multiverse at your fingertips and you'd play games?”

I frowned. “Hey don't knock it, it's my life. I mean I love advances in science. The practical experiments into quantum teleportation, the closer we get to time travel and Turing level Artificial

Intelligence. All that stuff is great but after you've blown up the Death Star and flown away on Moya, life goes on. You can't keep running from monsters forever."

She gave me the sort of smile you give to a toddler whose just announced he wants to be an astronaut and squeezed my arm. I looked at the arm, then at her. I didn't know what to say, didn't know what to think.

I didn't notice her go, didn't notice my lift arrive. The next thing I knew I was halfway through an episode of Etho's lab when it clicked. "She likes me, that woman likes me. Maybe the way someone likes a doggie that just done something stupid but she likes me"

The next morning she turned up at my door. Literally rang the doorbell and asked if I could come out to play. I hurriedly dressed in my jeans and hoodie then joined her.

"Come on." she said "We're going for a walk along the canal."

I shrugged and followed.

We talked. A lot. About the aliens we'd like to meet and the pets we'd like to have in an ideal world. She told me about the terminal illness she had, I told her about my piles. It was fun.

On the walk back she asked. "You always seem so unfit and yet you just walked 5 miles with me"

I shrugged and answered between breaths. "So long as I have a recovery time I can do anything"

She joined my D&D group and played a changeling druid so she could turn into a cat for maximum damage.

She would also take me out for walks every two weeks and I didn't mind, company makes exercise worthwhile.

Six months passed and that's when she made her move.

A door materialised before my bed, a free standing door at the end of my bed. I pulled on my horn rimmed glasses and got out of bed, I walked around and stood before the door, I pulled it open and saw her.

"By the way, since you never seem to ask, my name is Amy." She said with a smirk.

I laughed. "Like a name in a fairytale" I strode through the door and closed it behind me.

The room is as large as a cathedral and extends beyond the door. I stare at Amy. "You're not?"

"A timelord? No." said Amy as she pulled a lever revealing a large double bed behind a wall. "Doctor Who is fiction. My sister is an Architect of Chaos. She was given this upon graduating and recently bought a better model, which means I get it, which means you get to travel in it."

I strode over to the bed and sat down. "It is rather a lot to take in."

She laughs. "Oh this isn't even the half of it mate. Think I spent 6 months dating you just to offer you a trip in a habitation transport?"

I stared at her. “Let me guess, you're not from Guildford after all?”

She glared at me from her position at the console. “Is that a joke?”

“I don't know, is it?”

She rolled her eyes. “It's going to be a long trip, why don't you get some sleep?”

I shrugged and lay down in bed. I shut my eyes for a moment and then I was wide awake. “It's no good, I can't sleep.”

“It's morning, I laid some clothes for you over there” She said as she pointed to where a dresser, stool and full length mirror now stood in the centre of the cathedral like room.

“Wow.” I said as I strode over to examine the clothes.

I let out an ungodly squeal of delight upon discovery of a frock coat in brown and red with green highlights and then I proceeded to slowly get giddy over the awesomeness of the clothes: A paisley waistcoat, a tie with the Dissecting Worlds coat of arms on it, a pale green suit shirt and the pièce de résistance, slip-on brown leather brogues that fit my weird feet perfectly.

“Are you happy?” She asked as she hugged me from behind while I examined myself in the mirror.

I squeezed her arms and almost teared up. “Yes, I am.”

“Then let's get breakfast” She said as she strode out the door.

I followed and found myself in a world of new smells and aromas, like the alien equivalent of a busy Chinese marketplace. Servers had 6 trunks or gills or feathers.

Amy took my hand and led me to a less busy restaurant. She ordered for me as I couldn't even identify the language, let alone speak it.

“So what does being an Architect of Chaos entail?” I asked when the waiter had gone.

She smiled. “I'm not an Architect of Chaos Tom, only my sister is, but from what I can gather it's pretty much like being a player character in a game of Dungeons and Dragons. You doss around learning skills and becoming a badass while getting into trouble and solving people's problems. I suppose I'm lucky really. Architects of Chaos are more like roaming superheroes and less the highly trained and institutionalised loose canons of the Logicios who must all at some point serve their time keeping the Septagonoid menace at bay.”

“Who are the Septagonoids?” I asked as our food was delivered by a waiter.

A naked blond woman was laid out on the table, apparently lying on a decorative tray, with bacon serving as a bikini.

I was handed a huge knife and fork and Amy translated what the waiter said. “She is a delicacy among our people, served parboiled and alive, she will regenerate as you eat her to prolong the taste explosion. Do not worry about her suffering, her nerves are deadened by the boiling process and her flesh will melt in the mouth.”

“Get him away from me.” I said quietly. “Get him away from me now or I will stab him in the face.”

Amy hurriedly explained to the waiter and he left.

I dropped the knife and fork and started to hyper ventilate.

“Hello.” I said to the dish of the day.

“Hi.” She said back.

“Amy, we're leaving.” I said as I pulled the woman from the tray and wiped her down with napkins. “We are leaving and if you are not very careful I may be so inclined as to explain to them vividly why eating sapient animals is wrong”

I dressed the woman in my frock coat and led her through the streets towards the habitation transport.

Amy followed at a distance then closed the door behind us once we entered.

I led the poor woman over to the bed and let her sleep as Amy started flying the transport.

I was furious. I asked quietly. “What the fuck was that?”

“A test.” said Amy. “And you passed.”

I gritted my teeth. “What kind of a test involves potentially eating people?”

I heard Amy's voice catch as she studied the controls. “That woman isn't a person. She is a sylph, a sapient humanoid pet animal, but you didn't care and that's good.”

“So, what? Planets sell people as food and you're okay with that?”

“No!” She snapped as she turned to look at me, her eyes red. “No, I am not okay with that but I needed to know how you would react.”

“I'm sorry.” I said as I backed off a pace and raised my hands in surrender. “I didn't- I don't know what to say.”

Amy turned back to the console. “There's a spare frock coat in the wardrobe. I've activated the floor lighting, it'll guide you there.”

So I followed the green floor lights to the wardrobe. It was vast and magnificent. I swear I was lost for hours as I admired everything within but eventually I found a duplicate of the frock coat I'd worn earlier and made my way back out.

I arrived to find Amy doing the woman's hair.

“Am I interrupting something?” I asked.

“No.” said Amy. “We're nearly done.”

Then we walked out of the habitation transport into a pet shop.

The first thing I noticed was the adoption centre for Sylphs. There were five women and three men, each in their own one bedroom apartments come cages. I didn't notice Amy and the woman I'd rescued walk past me, neither did I notice Amy's return. All I knew is that after god knows how long I uttered a single word. “Why?”

Amy squeezed my hand and led me back into the habitation transport. She used the materialisation circuits to jump us to the head of the queue of every ride at Alton Towers and all I could think of was those poor men and women in the cages. We visited the Moon and Mars, even experienced the great storm of Jupiter and I barely noticed. We ate Galapagos turtle with Charles Darwin and I shook the hand of William Hartnell. It was amazing and I didn't care.

Finally as Amy showed me the end of the universe I said. “This is all very impressive but I can't help thinking of those poor Sylphs. I mean who's going to look after them and see that they are safe and loved?”

She hugged me, kissed me and started crying. I hugged her back and started reminding her how awesome the day was. After a while she pulled away and thanked me then ran off into the depths of the habitation transport. I didn't bother following her, I'd probably just get lost. So I went to sleep in that double bed.

The next day we had breakfast at Starbucks in Woking then visited the shooting of all my favourite movies to get autographs and pictures before finally we had dinner.

Amy took me back to that place that had served Sylph, only five years later.
This time they spoke English through electronic translators.

“Lady and Gentlemen, ours is the finest vat grown meat establishment in all the multiverse.”

“Vat grown meat.” I said with a lick of my lips. “I know what I'm having”

Amy laughed. “I'll have the same. Two buckets of Kentucky Fried Vat Grown Chicken please?”

The waiter nodded, gave a snot bubble of thanks and walked off.

“Listen.” said Amy “I know you've been wondering what this has all been about. I mean kidnapping you in the middle of the night and trying to feed you Sylph. Well I like you. The first time I met you you didn't care how I looked, just that I was a person asking you a question that deserved to be answered and then later that day when I saw you outside I saw you weren't a poser but genuinely cared about animals.”

“Hence the vatgrown KFC?” I interjected.

“Exactly.” she said. “So I met you that night and you said something so few people ever do. Danger and excitement is all well and good but people have lives to lead once the adrenaline wears off so I got to know you. I played with you in Dungeons and Dragons to get an idea of what you'd be like as an Architect of Chaos. I went on walks with you to find out more about you when your defences were down and to see how you'd react to me when my defences were down too.”

“Makes sense.” I said with a shrug. “I mean that is why people date.”

Then the food arrived and I stared. “It's on the bone”

Amy nodded with a smile. “It's how they get the muscle tissue to really taste like chicken. The bone is usually made from a grain mixture.”

I licked my lips. “I love you, you know. You're a great font of knowledge.” Then I took a bite of chicken and moaned with delight. “Oh, this is fantastic!”

“I'm glad you like it.” She said, with obvious joy in her voice. “Because there's something I need to tell you. My visiting you in the middle of the night and taking you here was my final test and you passed, you passed with flying colours.”

She pulled out a small plush velvet box and held it out before me.

I put down my chicken and stared at the box.

“What are you asking me, Amy?”

Amy swallowed. “This condition I've got, this terminal illness. There's one cure. And I don't want you to think I'm using you or anything. I've thought long and hard about this. Will you be my owner and solemnly swear to look after me as I become an original blend Sylph? Become your Sylph?”

I swallowed. “I don't know, I've never looked after a hamster, let alone...”

“I'll get you books and supplies. Hell, if you want I'll give you my sister's contact number in case there are any problems and then once I'm ready to start being independent again you can train to become an Architect of Chaos if you like.”

I took the box and I kissed her on the forehead. “If you trust that I can do this then it would be my honour.”

After buying some supplies from the petshop including several reference books, she took me home and left me with the keys and the habitation transport manual. She had a shower then laid on my bed and I gave her the pill. She shrunk to the size of hamster and over the next few months grew to cat then dog size before at last she returned to her old size and her consciousness kicked in.

We travelled across the multiverse for me to enrol as a student at the Architect of Chaos Academy and once I passed we flew off to adventure the multiverse together, writing wrongs where we see them.